Released for Press use

NEWS
FROM YOUR MUSEUM
THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Know your Museum better

No. 70 TORONTO December, 1946

CHRISTMAS BIRD IN THE BUSH

At this time of year everyone wonders whether there will be enough turkeys to go around. Gone are the days when father could step out the back door and bring down with his gun a Christmas dinner of wild turkey such as those preserved as specimens in the Royal Ontario Museum. Use of the turkey as a domestic bird was started on this continent, to which it is native, by the Indians of the American Southwest. From then on it had a remarkable history, being taken to Spain by the Spanish explorers, thence going to England in the early 16th Century and ultimately being brought back to America by the early settlers.

The turkey has never been considered to have great intellectual powers. In fact, in Norfolk County the early methods of capture displayed great contempt for his acumen. A log-covered pen was constructed, the crevices between the logs being narrowed so that a turkey could not escape through, and a trench beneath the bottom logs led outside. The trench was then sprinkled with corn and along went the turkey, gobbling with bent head. When the corn came to an end, he raised his head and found himself in the pen from which, for him, there was no escape, as it would never occur to him to go out the way he came in. . . .

PIONEER WINTER SPORTS

"When Winter muffles up his cloak
And binds the mire like a rock
Then to the loch the Curlers flock
Wi' gleesome speed."—*Robert Burns.*

In accounts of the early settlers of our country seldom is reference made to organized sport as we know it today, but curling was one of the first games to become universally popular. After the formation in 1820 of a club at Kingston, others sprang up in the years to follow in Fergus, Galt, Guelph, Perth, Niagara, Scarborough, Milton, and other centres. Gradually inter-club competitions evolved. In these early days substitutes were used, blocks of maple or beech or bell-shaped irons for stones, and corn brooms in place of the Scotch broom.

The Canadiana print room at the Royal Ontario Museum offers evidence that sleighing and skating were popular pastimes of our forbears. Recorded there are scenes showing the intense interest centered around the sleighing races, and one delightful set of six prints shows in pictorial form a winter picnic to Montmorenci, when a Captain Buzbie drives Miss Muffin. The series shows the couple coasting on sleds, getting lost in the snowdrifts on the way home. Judging by the expressions in the arrival home scene, explanations were required to account for the lateness of the hour.

COMING EVENTS AT THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Dec. 6th and 7th—"Ah Wilderness" by Eugene O'Neill—New Play Society.

Dec. 13th and 14th—Family Night Movies—Canada—
"Portage."
"Salmon Run."
"People of Potlach."
"West Wind."

Dec. 20th and 21st—"Nativity Play"—New Play Society.

WASSAIL! WASSAIL! WASSAIL!

Wassail was a term applied particularly to the bowl of spiced ale or wine which was a feature of the mediaeval Christmas. In the regulations of the royal household of Henry VII, the steward was to cry "Wassail" three times when entering with the bowl. Wassail was also used in Twelfth Night ceremonies, when the usual custom was for the master of the house to drink from the bowl first and then send it around the Board. The wassail bowl on display in the Royal Ontario Museum is a modest one, but the largest known will hold about four gallons. Certainly such a bowl would have distributed a goodly amount of Christmas cheer!

THE CURRELLY GALLERY

The ever popular room containing the Royal Ontario Museum's splendid collection of armour now bears the name "The Currelly Gallery." To Dr. Charles Trick Currelly, whose tireless energy and zeal were responsible for the amassing of a great part of the archaeological collections which have brought fame to this institution, it is a fitting tribute. Deeper and more permanent than the imprint of his name upon the stone above the archway is Dr. Currelly's contribution to education in this province.

DECEMBER GEM

Milady would surely be pleased to receive among her Christmas gifts a bit of jewellery containing her birthstone. Turquoise, the gem experts at the Royal Ontario Museum tell us, comes chiefly from Persia, Egypt and various localities in the United States. An opaque stone, its blue or green colour is its claim to beauty, the sky-blue variety being considered the most valuable. It is an appropriate stone for icy December, for legend has it that it protects the wearer from injury through falling.

NEW EXHIBITS AT THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

From December 3rd the special exhibition gallery on the main floor of the Royal Ontario Museum will display a group of Egyptian antiquities presented by the late Sir Robert Mond. About one hundred and fifty pieces are included in the gift, which, although made in 1939, was stored in England by the British Museum for safekeeping during the war years. In the group are vessels of pottery, glass and stone; statuettes, specimens of goldsmiths' work; toilet articles; amulets; some fine Roman Egyptian portraits painted in wax on wood, and many other objects representing ancient Egyptian history from 3,500 B.C. to the 3rd Century A. D. After being shown on the main floor as a special exhibit the pieces will be distributed through the Museum's large permanent collection of Egyptian arts and crafts.

December 15th will see the opening in the Ontario gallery of the Royal Ontario Museum of an exhibit of a further Paul Kane collection, comprised of a large quantity of original sketches and specimens of aboriginal handicrafts collected by the artist. Donated by Major Raymond Willis, in whose family they have been for many years, these additions to the Museum's large collection of oil paintings by the same artist will prove a great attraction to visitor and student alike.